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## Kensington's Graduating Seniors Head on to New Horizons

Bottom Row, left to right: Arjun Kinyon, El Cerrito High School (ECHS), Community College; Larsen Porter, Berkeley High School (BHS), UC Santa Barbara; Ariel McMurtrie, BHS, Reed; Aspen Ross, ECHS, UCB; Kyan Kurihana, ECHS, SF State; Ariel Boroditsky, St Mary's College High School, Northeastern; Oliver Findley, ECHS, UC Santa Cruz; Owen Morioka, ECHS, UC Riverside; Lune Mullarkey, St Mary's, University of British Columbia; Uma Kiyawak, BHS, University of Vermont; Simone Quinn, BHS, Queens University.

Middle Row: Samuel Goldstein, BHS, University of Wisconsin Madison; Theo Koehler, BHS, University of Washington; Iris Fisher, ECHS, Scripps College; Elsa Prendergast, ECHS, UC Davis; Colin Kiess, St Mary's, Hawaii Manoa; Clemens Mayer, Berkeley HS, UC Santa Cruz; Ethan Goldstein, BHS, UCSD; Willem Wijsen, Mission College Prep, University of Leiden; Cooper Heath, ECHS, Cal Poly SLO; Lachlan Mossman, BHS, Williams College; Talio Ubalde, ECHS, University of Washington; Logan Ferguson, ECHS, Cuesta College; Gabriella Martinucci, Novato High, San Diego State; Sophia Jacobs, BHS, Loyola Marymount.

Top Row: Henry Addison, ECHS, UC San Diego; Jack Mackey-Williams, BHS, UCLA; Wilson Tao, Bentley, UCB; Miles Reichmann, College Prep, Stanford; Max Krijanousky, BHS, UC Santa Cruz; Damian Piech, BHS, U. of Waterloo; Owen McMurtrie, BHS, Washington University; Amitai Bearman, Jewish Comm HS of the Bay, San Luis Obispo; Jack Maguire, ECHS, UC San Diego; Theo Adler, ECHS, Denver University; Milo Shogren, ECHS, UC Santa Barbara; Elsa Boardman, St Mary's, University of Washington; Yoann Perrodin, ECHS, Professional Cycling; Clara Heaslip, ECHS, Berkeley City College; Julia Janoff, ECHS, University of the Pacific.

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RUTH FRASSETTO

KENSINGTON AND BEYOND

JUNE 2025



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RUTH FRASSETTO

KENSINGTON MARKET UPDATE

JUNE 2025

MARCH–APRIL 2025

7 CLOSED SALES

Median List Price	\$995,000
Median Sales Price	\$1,270,000
Median Sq. Ft.	1,339 sq. ft.
Average Days on Market	14 days
List Price per Sq. Ft.	\$743
Sale Price per Sq. Ft.	\$934

MARCH–APRIL 2024

11 CLOSED SALES

Median List Price	\$1,100,000
Median Sales Price	\$1,420,000
Median Sq. Ft.	1,648 sq. ft.
Average Days on Market	14 days
List Price per Sq. Ft.	\$668
Sale Price per Sq. Ft.	\$908

In 2025, obtaining homeowners' insurance has become more challenging due to stricter underwriting standards, particularly in high-risk areas. If your property exhibits these red flags, it's advisable to address these issues proactively.

KEY INSURABILITY RED FLAGS

▪

Outdated Electrical Systems: Homes with knob-and-tube wiring or fuse boxes are deemed high-risk by insurers.

▪

Aging Roofs: Roofs over 20 years old or made from wood shakes can lead to higher premiums or policy denials.

▪

Location in High-Risk Areas: Properties in wildfire-prone zones or slide zones face increased scrutiny.

▪

Deferred Maintenance: Neglected upkeep, such as damaged gutters, worn siding, decks, and railings, or outdated HVAC systems, can signal increased risk.

▪

Lack of Earthquake Retrofitting: Insurance companies like to see foundation bolts, tie downs, and shear walls.

▪

Unique Property Features: Unusual features like treehouses or unconventional structures can complicate underwriting.

▪

Lack of Security Systems: Homes without basic security installations may be viewed as higher risk.

▪

Frequent or Recent Claims: A history of multiple insurance claims can be a red flag for insurers.

Proactively addressing potential insurance red flags is crucial—not only to facilitate a smoother sale but also to safeguard your own future insurability. Homes with outdated systems, deferred maintenance, or located in high-risk areas are increasingly subject to policy cancellations or non-renewals. If your insurance is canceled, re-instating coverage may require costly upgrades, and premiums can escalate significantly. Buyers are acutely aware of these issues, as securing insurance is often a prerequisite for obtaining a mortgage. By mitigating these concerns now, you enhance your property's appeal and protect yourself from potential insurance challenges down the line.

Curious about your home's value or what it takes to sell in today's market? Schedule a complimentary, confidential consultation to gain expert insights tailored to your property. Whether you're considering selling or simply exploring your options, I'm here to provide clarity and guidance—no pressure, just personalized information to help you make informed decisions.

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## April Patrol Log

### Patrol Activity Log

Apr 1: Traffic stop on Colusa Ave.; driver arrested and vehicle impounded.

Apr 6: Intoxicated subject contacted on Arlington Ave.; subject cited.

Apr 8: Grand theft reported by local business.

Apr 8: Credit card fraud reported on Ardmore Rd.

Apr 8: Intoxicated subject contacted on Arlington Ave.; subject cited.

Apr 8: Petty theft of auto parts on York Ave.

Apr 11: Grand theft of auto parts on Los Altos Dr.

Apr 11: Non-injury vehicle accident on Windsor Ave.

Apr 12: Suspicious circumstance reported on Cambridge Ave.; report filed.

Apr 14: Hit-and-run on Ocean View Ave.; report filed.

Apr 15: Grand theft reported on Santa Fe Ave.; report filed.

Apr 15: Vehicle impounded on Kingston Rd.

Apr 19: Suspicious circumstance reported on Arlington Ave.

Apr 20: Traffic stop on Colusa Ave.; driver arrested and vehicle impounded.

Apr 21: Suspicious detail report on Ocean View Ave.

Apr 21: Fraud attempt detail on Ocean View Ave.

Apr 22: Occupied stolen vehicle on Lake Dr.; driver and passenger arrested.

Apr 23: Hit-and-run on Yale Ave.

Apr 25: Grand theft of auto parts reported on Santa Fe Ave.

Apr 28: Suspicious detail report at Kensington Hilltop Elementary.

Apr 29: Vehicle tampering on Oak View Ave.

Apr 30: Identity theft reported at the Kensington Police Department.

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OUTLOOK

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JULY - AUG - 2025

DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ❖ JUN 8

Editorial Deadline ❖ JUN 10

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the writers and do not reflect the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the Kensington Community Council. Letters must be signed and include the resident's phone number and address (which will not be printed). Letters 350 words or under will appear in the print edition (space permitting). Any letter over 350 words will be printed in the online edition only. Publication of letters and articles is subject to space and the editor's discretion. Obituaries of Kensington residents are printed without charge. All material must be received by the 10th of the month preceding issue date; submit by email to [editor@kensingtonoutlook.com](mailto:editor@kensingtonoutlook.com). No press releases or PDFs; Word documents or text in the body of an email are acceptable.

Use one space, not two, after all periods.

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# Letters to the Editor

## Kensington’s Police Are Fine Where They Are

Dear Editor:

The May *Outlook’s* talk of a hefty property tax increase for Kensington residents to finance new accommodations for the Kensington police has me apprehensive. This raises questions, in my mind, about the role and importance of Kensington’s police force. We all want to feel safe and secure, but would moving the police back into Kensington actually increase our safety and security? I think not.

I’m not denying that Kensingtonians can become victims of crime. I had a car stolen from in front of my house in the middle of the day. But as Jim Watt points out in his May issue letter, thanks to its geographic location, etc., Kensington has “one of the lowest crime rates in California.” I doubt that monthly perusal of the Police Log will instill terror in anyone’s heart.

While police officers compile reports of crime and may relay information to other jurisdictions about a suspected crime, it would be a rare and fortuitous occasion that an officer could catch someone in the act of committing a crime. So “crime prevention” is kind of a misnomer, unless the occasional sighting of a patrol car is enough to send the potential criminal looking elsewhere. A patrol that begins in El Cerrito should be sufficient for that!

In my opinion, it should be the responsibility of the county sheriff to provide us with police services, as county sheriffs do in other unincorporated areas (for example, the County of Los Angeles) or even cities (Lafayette, for instance). But I saw all those “No Contracting Out” signs a few years ago, and I won’t try to talk you into that. The Kensington police are okay housed where they are, and I would strongly oppose any significant tax increase to bring them closer. Let us not be ruled by fear.

Al Sandine

# KPPCSD Board No Longer Pursuing 219 Arlington as Police Landing Spot

By Linnea Due

On May 8, the directors of the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District board met in a closed session before the regular 7pm meeting. The subject was 219 Arlington, the house immediately to the south of the reconstructed Public Safety Building (PSB), now used solely for fire services. The proposal that the police district acquire 219 Arlington to house the El Cerrito-based Kensington Police Department had been floated for years, but despite queries from a couple past directors and at least one general manager, nothing had progressed past sporadic interest.

That interest sharpened when the residents moved out last summer, and only intensified when the house went on the market on April 7, at \$795,000. (Owner Byron Kawaichi is the designer of the *Outlook*, but did not contribute to this article.) The closed session meeting on May 8 was the second of two closed sessions on this topic, the first a special meeting on April 16, after which nothing was disclosed by the board. All real estate and personnel negotiations take place in closed session, and the fact that no word leaked out between the board’s two sessions meant that the community was in the dark for weeks about whether the district had made an offer.

During public comment at the April 16 meeting, resident Ciara Wood begged the board not to squander the opportunity to purchase the house. Wood has made no secret of her opposition to the board’s other option to site a police station in Kensington Park south of the library. Estimated costs for that structure are at minimum \$10M and could be twice that figure (a massive retaining wall and infrastructure alone are estimated at almost \$5M, a figure that does not include a mandated traffic light). After costs were revealed to build on the south slope, the current board decided to wait until planned reorganization of the two special districts is achieved, after which a consolidated board would again take up the question of where the police could be housed in Kensington.

But then 219 Arlington went on the market, and there was another option, difficult as it might be. During public comment in April, Chris and Danielle Madugo both spoke about the possibility that geotechnical issues could prevent the house from being repurposed as a police station. A well-known fault lies under the Arlington, and soil changes on the northeast side of the PSB led to the suspicion that a possible trace fault might run behind the PSB, though the consultant said it was impossible to tell if there were a fault and if there was, where it might go. To ascertain whether there was a fault and to investigate further, the retaining wall at the back of the PSB would have had to be removed, and that was not done due to the expense and concern that removing the wall could impact properties behind the PSB.

Paul Dorroh felt that buying 219 Arlington at a reasonable price would give the district an option to explore, and Vida Dorroh suggested that the structure could be used to house district administration and some police functions, such as evidence storage and perhaps the armory, thus allowing officers to use the first floor of the PSB as their station without the space limitations that prevented that floor from housing the entirety of the department.

## Park Was Purchased as Open Space

Public comment before the meeting on May 8 ran in a similar vein. Ciara Wood pointed out that in 1995, 70.3 percent of Kensington voters voted to purchase the south slope as a park and as open space. Wood, who served on the KPPCSD board, said, “In all the eight years I served on this board, we never thought of that property as buildable lots... We don’t want to see the park be something else. Do what it takes to buy [219 Arlington].”

Susan Dasilva, who lives at 207 Arlington, said that she and her neighbors always thought 219 would be good for the police station. “I’m just keeping my fingers crossed,” she said.

Danielle Madugo congratulated the board on spending so much time on assessing the idea, but cautioned that “appropriate due diligence doesn’t demand that you spend money.”

Meryl Rafferty said that she had visited the police station in El Cerrito and viewed it as a “desolate and unwelcoming area for our police.” She hoped acquiring 219 would work out.

After public comment, the board went into closed session, where it remained for nearly 40 minutes. Later in the meeting, when that agenda item was reached, Interim General Manager David Aranda reported on what had been a mystery to the public for weeks.

Aranda said that on April 16, the board decided to investigate the feasibility of developing 219 as a police station. Directors Alex Aquino-Fike, Dave Spath, and Aranda talked to the county’s Building and Planning department and to architect George Miers and determined that while there were concerns, there was “nothing to put a complete stop to pursuing the property.” The district’s realtor submitted a cash offer above the asking price on April 25. The offer included contingencies, such as a 200-day escrow period during which the district intended to satisfy stipulations regarding the ability to

gain approvals from various government agencies to build a police headquarters as well as obtaining a signoff from a seismic engineer and architect. There was no acceptance or official counter offer from the sellers, though the sellers asked for a \$300,000 nonrefundable cash payment that could be applied to the purchase price due to the long escrow and work being done on the property while it was still in escrow. During the May 8 closed session, however, the board learned that an offer had apparently been accepted from what Aranda termed “an outside developer.” He concluded, “So because of the pending offer, there is no longer a pursuit of that property by the KPPCSD.”

## Paths Finally a Reality

In other district news, the acquisition of three paths moved forward. Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia joined the meeting to explain the process, which involves the county accepting ownership of the paths, then executing a quitclaim deed in favor of the district. At that point, the district would accept the quitclaim and record the deed, thus putting the paths in public hands. “Your legal counsel can review that and make sure it’s consistent with your needs,” Gioia finished. “Hopefully we’ll have this all done in June.” Acquiring the three paths was another years-long effort, much of it orchestrated by Mark Altenberg and new fire board director Rodney Paul, along with many others. The paths have been kept up by volunteer hours from the Kensington Pathkeepers in concert with the Kensington Improvement Club, and now the county will contribute funds to path maintenance. See story by Pathkeepers Rodney Paul and Supervisor John Gioia on page 4.

Kensington Police Chief Mike Gancasz answered questions about a new state assembly bill, AB 413, known as the “Daylighting Law.” Effective this January (the district website’s effective date is incorrect), AB 413 aims to improve visibility of drivers at intersections by prohibiting parking within 20 feet of any intersection. Although it refers to crosswalks, it applies to any intersection, marked or unmarked. Gancasz said that enforcement is difficult to manage in Kensington, because of extremely limited parking and narrow, curving roads with cross streets seemingly laid out at random. There was a question about painting curbs red in that 20-foot span, but often there are no curbs, and the county, which would be in charge of such a project, showed no interest in taking it on. The police have been giving out warning citations since January, but as of April 1 Gancasz said officers would fine cars parked within 20 feet of intersections.

# Passings

**Alexander Mihailovski** (Nov 8, 1937-May 2, 2025), Kensington resident of 53 years, passed away in his home from complications of alzheimer’s. Alex was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. His family immigrated first to Germany and then, after WWII, to Pennsylvania. Alex received his Bachelor's degree from Penn State. After postings overseas with the USAF, Alex graduated from UCLA with a PhD in organic chemistry. There, he met his future wife, Tamara. Since 1972, they have lived in their Kensington home while Alex was working at Stauffer Chemical Company (later ICI, then Syngenta) in Richmond.

As a chemist, Alex was very interactive with his professional colleagues and the scientific community at large. He obtained many patents for his work, served as the president of the California section of the American Chemical Society, and later, as Chair of the Board of Trustees. In 2009, he was honored with the distinguished Walter Petersen Award.

Alex was very dedicated to his family and enjoyed many hobbies with joie de vivre: hiking, skiing, opera, music, literature, film, cooking, and social celebrations. He particularly loved traveling both for work and with his family, sharing his adventures via entertaining photo presentations for friends. He was a regular participant and volunteer for our local committees for disaster preparedness and enjoyed many pleasant hours in the Kensington Library perusing their periodicals.

Alex is survived by his wife of 55 years, Tamara, son Nick, daughter-in-law Brandi, granddaughter Sasha, brother Peyo, and sister-in-law Jan.

He will be dearly missed by his family and friends.



**Betty Barraza**, a longtime Kensington resident, died December 29, 2024. Betty was born January 12, 1935, in Smithville, Mississippi. She was the youngest of four children of Ira Denton and Martha Elizabeth “Bettye” Thompson. Betty grew up in and spent her early adult years in Memphis.


In January, 1964, she came west to San Francisco with two other young women for a six-month adventure living away from “home.” Betty, however, never got around to going back “home,” for she liked it in San Francisco. She never forgot her family and friends in the South, but she just liked living in this area better. It became her new “home.”

Late in the summer of 1964 she met her future husband, Ray. As a Bay Area native he had extensive knowledge of this area, and she was most interested to learn all about the area and to explore it with him as “guide.”

Ray and Betty married in 1967, and in 1970 they moved to Kensington where they raised their two sons, David and Paul. Betty immediately found a wonderful new “home” in the Kensington community. Always with a smile, she quickly became part of many community activities including KCC, Kensington School PTA, Cub Scouts, and finally supporting the students at El Cerrito High School. She often took on leadership roles to make sure things really did happen!




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Three Paths Finally Gain an Owner—Us

By Rodney Paul, Kensington Pathkeepers and John Gioia, Contra Costa County Supervisor

The Kensington community values its 11 walking paths and has long desired to bring these paths into public ownership so that they can be properly maintained for safety and enjoyment. A coalition of Kensington residents including the Kensington Pathkeepers, Supervisor John Gioia and County Public Works have been working together for over three years to develop a fiscally responsible and sustainable plan to achieve the goal of public ownership and maintenance of these paths.

On May 8, a historic milestone occurred when the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) unanimously voted to enter into an agreement with Contra Costa County to acquire the Ardmore, Beloit and Coventry paths for public ownership. This step creates a mechanism to maintain and improve the paths for the first time since developers subdivided Kensington over 110 years ago.

Under the agreement, the county would accept ownership of the three paths, which were originally offered to the county by the developer in 1911. The county would then immediately convey them by quitclaim deed to KPPCSD and contribute \$175,000 over five years to the district to financially assist in the maintenance and improvement of the paths. The county is also making some capital improvements and installing signage for the three paths prior to their conveyance to KPPCSD.

A report prepared by Supervisor Gioia’s office and County Public Works with the input of a working group of Kensington residents outlined several options for public ownership. This report was discussed at KPPCSD’s February meeting. The report recommended acquiring these three paths for public ownership as an initial step.

At its February meeting, the KPPCSD board unanimously voted to move forward with this recommendation and develop an agreement with the county. The Kensington Fire Protection District also voted unanimously to support KPPCSD’s action. (Rodney Paul is a director on the Kensington fire board and introduced the resolution.)

Kensington’s walking paths were originally created to provide access on foot to public transit lines operating on Arlington Avenue, and they have been popular for recreation and improving pedestrian access to shopping and other amenities. But in the absence of a maintenance plan and funding, some have significantly deteriorated. Residents seeking to make repairs and needed improvements, such as handrails, have faced liability and other concerns.

Formal public ownership will enable KPPCSD (and the newly formed consolidated Community Services District) to responsibly oversee maintenance and plan improvements. Liability risks will be covered under the same insurance used for Kensington Park and at minimal additional cost. Executing the county-KPPCSD agreement will secure the initial three paths in perpetuity and serve as a pilot that should hopefully lead to the other eight paths also being publicly acquired and maintained.

This milestone is the result of hard work by many people and entities over a period that spans decades. We are gratified that our collective efforts to bring the county and community together have resulted in the development and implementation of a responsible plan to finally bring our treasured paths under public ownership and maintenance for current residents and future generations.

The Kensington Improvement Club must also be recognized for its decades-long leadership and advocacy to bring the paths under public ownership. We are grateful for all who helped us reach this bright new day for the Kensington paths, and we are proud of the Kensington community for achieving this long-sought goal to better enjoy the beloved paths.

Our job is not over. More work lies ahead. The Kensington Pathkeepers plan to raise money to supplement the public funds for path improvements. It will also plan volunteer work parties to clear the paths of vegetation and debris and will continue to focus on public acquisition of the remaining paths.

To learn more about the paths and ways you can help, please go to the Kensington Pathkeepers’ website at <http://kensingtonpathkeepers.org> and subscribe to the email list.



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# At the Library: Ohlone Culture Program Features Traditional Land Management

By Jenny Rockwell

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**Tues, June 3, 6:30pm Castoff’s Knitting Club** Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

**Tuesdays, June 3, 17, 24 6:30pm Family Storytime** Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.



**Tues, June 10, 6pm Card Game Night** Come join the fun at the library with Card Games Night. We have games for all ages including (but not limited to), Set, Poetry for Neanderthals, Spot It!, Alphabet Go Fish, and the Who Pooped? memory game, and Uno.

**Thurs, June 12, 2pm Blast Off with Paper Rockets** Start summer off with a bang by making a cool paper rocket and shooting it 150 feet in the air.

**Tues, June 17, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle** Join the Kensington Seamsters Union, local 94707 in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags, which will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market.

**Tues, June 17, 6:30pm An Evening with Café Ohlone** Vincent Medina and Louis Trevino are founders of mak-’amham/Cafe Ohlone, a local cultural institution that teaches the public about the unbroken roots of the Ohlone people. Come hear about their work to heal the fraught relationship of the Ohlone people with UC Berkeley through the campus-wide ‘ottoy Initiative. They will also discuss the establishment of mak-warep Ohlone Land Conservancy, which is working toward the reacquisition and restoration of land using traditional land management practices such as cultural burns, traditional digging, aeration of soil, and seasonal coppicing of plants.

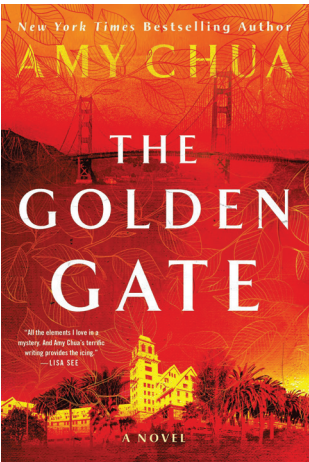
**Tuesday, June 24, 6:15pm Kensington Library Book Club** The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday. The selection for June is *The Golden Gate* by Amy Chua.

**Tues, June 24, Read to a Dog** Join a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Same-day, drop-in signup starts 15 minutes before session.

**Sat, June 28, 3pm Gardening Conversation Circle: Seed Saving** Library patron and gardener Tilu will lead a conversation and share information about seed saving. Participants are welcome to bring seeds they have saved and show participants how to process them.

**June 2- August 2, Summer Reading** The Contra Costa County Library’s 2025 all ages summer literacy program is all about games and play! Visit [ccclib.org/summer](http://ccclib.org/summer). Every reader who completes a passport is eligible for a free book and a chance to win prizes.

Art Exhibit Paintings by S. Newman through July 17: [www.newmanesque.net](http://www.newmanesque.net)



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**District Meetings**  
KPPCSD: June 12  
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# School District Budgeting Cuts Leave Families and Staff Scrambling

## How the District Got Here and What We Can Do

By Khushali Gala Narechania

Many Kensington families have had, currently have, or will have students at Hilltop Elementary, Korematsu Middle School, or El Cerrito High, all West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD, or the district) schools. WCCUSD serves around 25,000 students in 54 schools across five cities and six unincorporated areas, including Kensington.

WCCUSD recently made headlines over budget cuts that affect students, families, and teachers across the district—including many here in Kensington. These cuts stem from a mix of declining revenues and a complex budgeting process, and they affect people who are both part of and essential to our community.

Like many districts nationwide, WCCUSD has faced budget deficits for many years, due to two main factors. First, enrollment has dropped significantly—by 9.5 percent (about 4,000 students) over the past four years—and state funding is tied directly to enrollment. State funding also depends on daily attendance, and chronic absenteeism is a growing issue. Absenteeism is projected to double compared to pre-pandemic rates. And those projections may understate the problem, as increased immigration enforcement by the federal government has exacerbated attendance concerns—even as WCCUSD provides support for all families in its schools.

Second, once-stable sources of funding are more uncertain. For example, federal post-pandemic support expired in 2023, and more recent cuts to the U.S. Department of Education raise questions about the future of federal support. Looking ahead, a parcel tax supporting WCCUSD is set to expire in 2027, adding further uncertainty to the district’s local funding base beyond that date. In all, WCCUSD stands to lose tens of millions of dollars in the coming years.

These running deficits can lead to additional problems. In 1991, for example, WCCUSD needed to take out a \$29 million emergency loan from the state—a loan that took 21 years to pay off. During that time, WCCUSD faced both loan servicing costs and a requirement to keep additional reserves on hand, further limiting the district’s financial flexibility.

To avoid repeating that history, WCCUSD adopted a fiscal solvency plan in 2024, committing to cut \$32.7 million in costs between 2024 and 2027. For the current school year, the plan called for \$19.7 million in cuts, which were approved in last year’s budgeting process. The district also committed, under the plan, to \$7 million in cuts for the 2025-2026 school year and \$6 million in the following year. These cuts were approved—after much public comment and discussion among board members—at the district’s March 12 Board of Education meeting. In May, the Contra Costa County Office of Education agreed that WCCUSD can meet its financial obligations if it sticks to this proposed plan, approving a “positive certification” of WCCUSD’s budget.

### Planning for the Worst-Case Scenario Creates Its Own Problems

But the district budgeting process is its own hornet’s nest. WCCUSD sets its budget for the “worst-case scenario” for revenue. WCCUSD has several sources of funds from which it can draw. First, there is federal revenue. Second, there is the state funding described above, known as LCFF (for “Local Control Funding Formula”). Third are the funds raised by the local parcel tax. And finally, WCCUSD can draw on its own reserves. As noted above, WCCUSD was required to keep additional reserves on hand while in debt to the state—6 percent of total operating costs (roughly \$37 million), as opposed to the usual 3 percent.

Of these funding sources, WCCUSD can only count on some when planning its budget. Because it must set its budget for the worst-case scenario, it cannot account for funds deemed “restricted,” such as federal funding confirmed after the conclusion of the budgeting process. Funds raised from the local parcel tax are similarly restricted. And even after drawing the district’s reserve fund, known as Fund 17, down to the minimum required 3 percent of operating costs (or roughly \$15 million) over the next three years, the county has deemed the planned cuts for the worst-case scenario necessary.

This decision, especially the exclusion of restricted funds, can cause whiplash for WCCUSD teachers and families. Because the budget excludes restricted funds, it includes cuts to positions the district intends to fund once those restricted resources become available. This leads to legally required layoff notices for teachers and staff, even if the district plans to eventually fund these positions. Teachers and staff understandably seek secure employment elsewhere, causing churn and uncertainty. Similarly, schools are asked to change their schedules by, for example, reducing elective periods to comply with a budget limited to only unrestricted funding. Once restricted funding becomes available, schools might revert to their original plans—but, by that point, it may be too late to implement a new bell schedule.

All of this is just on the revenue side of the equation. WCCUSD’s costs are also in flux. The teachers’ contracts will be renegotiated this year, and the district will need to account for increases in teacher pay and benefits. The district also has significant administrative, operational, and contract costs that may require further scrutiny to balance the budget and minimize disruption to the district’s educational mission, including support for teachers and staff.

WCCUSD’s budget challenges create uncertainty for teachers and staff, affect students through shifting schedules and fewer classes, and leave families with more unpredictability. Because the district’s budgeting process must exclude funding that often arrives later, it implements cuts that cause disruption even when positions or programs are ultimately restored.

This article aims to help clarify how school funding and district budgeting work—and why the process can feel so unpredictable. There’s no simple fix, but families can stay informed and involved. Ask your schools’ principals and teachers how families can help, and about how the district can better support their schools and students. Raise those concerns with the WCCUSD School Board—board meetings are public and feature multiple opportunities for public comment—or with Board of Education president and Kensington’s representative Leslie Reckler at [Leslie.reckler@wccusd.net](mailto:Leslie.reckler@wccusd.net)

# Voice-Generated AI Gives New Meaning to Don’t Believe Everything You Hear

By David Stuckman and Linnea Due

Have you crossed one of the bay’s bridges and gotten a text that day or the next demanding that you pay the toll by clicking a link in the text? You scratch your head, wondering if your FasTrak account somehow ran out of money. But no, this is just one of the scams targeting East Bay residents. If you Google FasTrak scam, you’ll find multiple warnings of this particular ruse. It’s clever because you did indeed cross one of the bridges.

Scammers are becoming ever more sophisticated. If they gain access to your phone or computer (don’t click that link!), you could lose money, your identity, and your sanity trying to clear up the mess. Now we need to beware of AI-generated voice scams.

Imagine answering the phone and hearing the distressed voice of your son. He says he’s in jail, and he desperately needs money to bail himself out. The caller ID appears legitimate and your son’s voice is unmistakable. Moments later, an “attorney” follows up, instructing you to send bail money through an instant, untraceable payment method.

Scammers are now using artificial intelligence (AI) and voice-cloning technology to deceive families into handing over money, posing as loved ones in distress.

### How These Scams Work

With rapid advancements in AI, criminals can clone a person’s voice with just a few seconds of audio—often taken from social media or online videos (Zoom, anyone?). Armed with this technology, scammers call unsuspecting families, mimicking the voice of a jailed relative and creating a sense of panic. The “attorney” who calls next demands payment via Cash App, cryptocurrency, or another untraceable method—often threatening legal consequences if the family hesitates.

For decades, families have relied on a loved one’s voice and caller ID to confirm identities. Now, neither can be trusted. AI technology has advanced to the point where even the most skeptical individuals can be fooled.

### How to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

Scammers rely on panic and urgency to bypass critical thinking. To safeguard against these AI-based scams, families should take proactive steps: Verify any call before acting.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be in jail, hang up and contact the jail or police department directly.

Establish a family safe word. Create a unique code word or security question known only to immediate family members. If you ever receive a distress call, ask for the safe word to verify the caller’s identity. Don’t share the word via email, text or any written format that could be compromised.

Scammers push for immediate payment using untraceable methods like Cash App or Venmo. Legitimate bail bondsmen and attorneys will never demand payment this way. Many scammers gather voice samples and personal details from social media. Be mindful of what you or your family share publicly, especially voice recordings and personal details.

And if you suspect a scam, you’re probably onto something. Google the specifics before you do anything else. Call a close friend or the police. Ask for help.

AI technology is advancing faster than the laws meant to regulate it, leaving consumers vulnerable. Until lawmakers address these risks, public awareness is the best defense. If you or someone you know has encountered a scam like this, report it to the Kensington Police immediately.

# Cameras Help Take Two Off the Streets

Kensington’s Flock cameras identified three stolen vehicles driving through Kensington. A Flock alert for one of the stolen vehicles on April 22 led to officers locating the occupied stolen vehicle and apprehending two suspects. Both had lengthy criminal records with outstanding felony and misdemeanor warrants from several Bay Area counties. The investigation was presented to the Contra Costa County District Attorney’s Office for prosecution.

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Classifieds must be prepaid and received by the 10th of the month preceding publication. You can also mail an ad to PO Box 2212, El Cerrito, CA 94530.

# Kensington Community Education

## KASEP–Kensington After School Program

We just wrapped up another fun and creative spring session of KASEP, serving TK through 6th grade students with a wide range of after-school classes. From baking muffins and making chocolate in our cooking classes, to crafting mosaics and jewelry in our art classes our students explored their talents and tried new things. They flipped in gymnastics, leveled up in year-long Spanish, practiced discipline in judo, learned to code, built amazing LEGO creations, discovered sign language, and even stepped into the spotlight with circus arts—mastering stilt walking, juggling, and more. KASEP continues to be a vibrant hub where curiosity, creativity, and community come together after the school bell rings.

Mark your calendars for the Fall KASEP Registration on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025. Classes begin Monday, September 8th.



## KCC Summer Camp



We are thrilled to introduce Ailish Smith as our new Camp Director!

Ailish has worked as a counselor at KCC for the past three years and could not be more excited for a new, fantastic summer to come.

KCC has served as a welcoming, fun, and supportive summer job during her time at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is graduating this spring with a Bachelor's

Degree in Art as well as Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. Because of her experience in both areas of study, Ailish brings a creative, thoughtful, and inclusive approach to camp leadership.

She believes in the power of joyful self-expression, play, and community to help children grow into confident, compassionate individuals. Ailish has volunteered at an after-school art program in Santa Cruz, working with children ages 2-10 to develop their creativity, confidence, and motor skills. Additionally, she worked as an artist assistant with Dana King, creating and assembling her sculpture Monumental Reckoning, which was installed in Golden Gate Park from 2021 to 2024.

Ailish is looking forward to fostering an inclusive, caring, and engaging camp community in her capacity as director. She is eager to incorporate new, enriching activities and games that complement the play-based social and emotional learning that makes summer camp such a joyful, impactful, and memorable experience for every child. As a former camp-avoidant kid, Ailish is especially sensitive to how intimidating camp can feel at first. This perspective helps her create a welcoming environment where every child, whether shy, outgoing, or somewhere in between, can feel safe, included, and excited to participate.

She is honored to share her love of creativity, community, and joy with this summer's incoming campers. Please reach out with any questions or say hello!

## Spring Schedule for Adult and Family Classes



### Pointed Pen Calligraphy for Beginners Workshop w/Irina Zhivotovskaia

Kensington Recreation Building  
Thursday, June 12th  
9:00am-11:00am  
\$30

### Cardio Dance with Karma Smart

Fridays 11:30am-12:30  
Community Center  
Cost \$15 drop in or register online

### Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am  
Drop-in fee is \$15

### Yoga with Anja Borgstrom

Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am  
Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

### Slim Chance Circus School - All-Ages Unicycle & Juggling Class

Thursday evenings, 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM  
Recreation Building Classroom A (Kensington Park near the flat upper lawn)  
Cost: \$20 per person (drop-in). Family discounts available

### Family Yoga in the Park with Lori Hess

Family Yoga will take place on rotating weekend days @ 10:00-10:45 (kids aged 2 to 5) on the grassy lawn outside the KCC Office/Recreation Building (past the tennis courts).

If possible, please bring a waterproof blanket/tarp, two yoga mats (we will have extra mats available), warm layers, and a water bottle.

Spring dates: Saturday 5/3, Sunday 5/11, Saturday 5/17 and Sunday 5/31. Suggested cost: \$25 per class; Please contact Lori Hess wayto-glowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

### Register at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes](https://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes)

The Kensington Outlook can now be found at: [KensingtonOutlook.com](https://www.kensingtonoutlook.com)  
Archive copies can also be found on our website dating back to 2003.  
KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Recreation Building Kensington CA 94707 E-mail: [Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org](mailto:Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org), or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: [www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org](https://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org).



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# KENSINGTON EATS OUT

The Heart of Kensington: Kensington Circus Pub  
By Ittai Shiu

If you live in Kensington, you’ve likely experienced the charm of Kensington Circus Pub. Whether you’re a regular or just passing through Colusa Circle to pick up some fresh ingredients at the farmers’ market or treats from Semifreddi’s bakery, you’ve doubtless noticed that the Circus Pub is a cornerstone of the community.

For 35 years, the Circus Pub has become a favorite spot for gathering with friends and family. A cross between an American Grill and an English pub, the establishment serves classic British ales and West Coast brew in a warm and inviting atmosphere.

The pub's menu is as much a draw as its drinks. While you’ll find essential bar snacks such as fries and onion rings, the Corn Fritters are a must-try, offering a satisfying balance of sweet and savory. For heartier fare, the Circus Pub features high quality pasta dishes, along with a tempting array of burgers and sandwiches.



But the spotlight remains on traditional English dishes. Of course, there’s the iconic Fish and Chips—made with cod strips deep-fried in a beer batter and available in servings of three to six pieces, perfect for sharing. Other standouts include the hearty Shepherd’s Pie, featuring stewed lamb topped with mashed potatoes, tomato-cilantro salsa, and cheese. Another pub crowd-pleaser is Bangers and Mash, pairing juicy pork sausages with house-made mashed potatoes and rich gravy.

My wife was ecstatic when she saw her favorite dessert on the menu: Sticky Toffee Pudding. It’s a moist sponge cake bathed in warm toffee sauce, which restaurants don’t often get right. The pub’s version satisfied a harsh critic and was a truly comforting end to the meal.

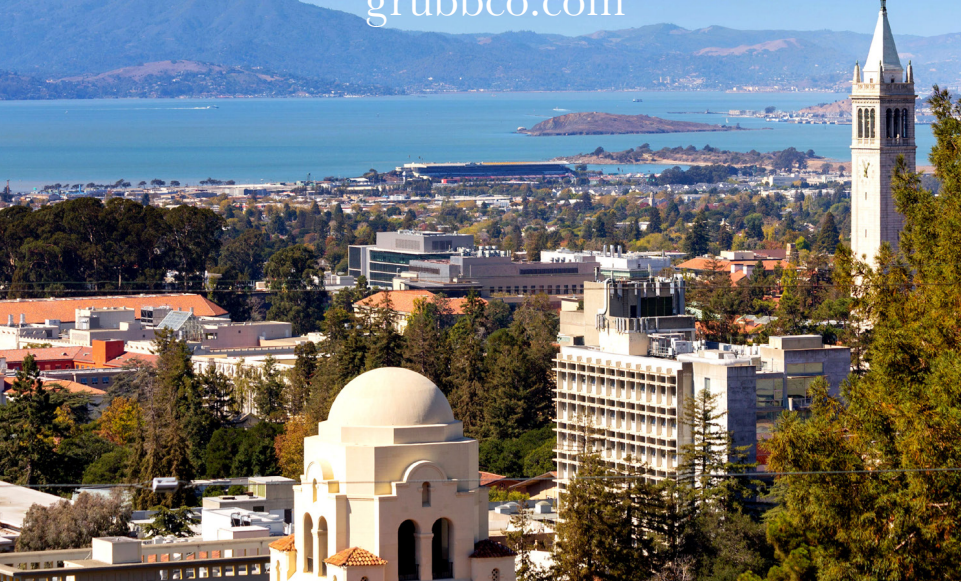
Beyond its food and drinks, the Circus Pub thrives as a dynamic music venue. Friday and Saturday nights come alive with an eclectic mix of live music. During our last visit, we were treated to French Cafe Jazz, with its upbeat accordion and spirited violin. A few couples got up from their tables to dance (yes, we were one of them). The events calendar is an exciting showcase of everything from country and rock to blues and bluegrass.

Their most popular event, literally called the “Beatles Thingy,” is held on the last Sunday of every month. It’s an energetic Beatles sing-along where the band and the audience take the stage. I repeat, you can experience live-band Beatles karaoke right here in Kensington.

Kensington Circus Pub is more than just a place to eat and drink—it’s a reflection of

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the community’s spirit. At its epicenter is Scott McFadin, who bought the pub in 2012 after spending time as its bartender. Since then, he has worked hard to cultivate a welcoming and inclusive environment with a staff that combines attentive service with genuine friendliness that makes everyone feel at home from the moment they walk through the door.

McFadin's stories about the pub’s past also provide a fascinating view into our local history, filled with anecdotes about notable guests, including Zsa Zsa Gabor, members of The Cure, and even Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. Did you know Maya Angelou resided a few blocks away on Colusa in the ‘70s?

Whether you’re drawn in by the food, the live music, or the history, there’s no denying that Kensington Circus Pub is a quintessential part of life in Kensington. Congratulations and thank you for 35 years of being a place where stories are shared, friendships are forged, and the community comes together!



Kensington Circus Pub, 389 Colusa Ave., 510-524-8814

## County Offers Free Composting Workshops Online

By Maureen Parkes, Senior Planning Technician

The Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development sponsors several free workshops throughout the year on composting. The aim is to reduce waste and teach residents how to create nutrient-rich compost at home. Whether you’re curious about home composting or want to start a worm bin, we’ve got you covered. We welcome all Contra Costa County residents, and anyone else who wants to learn about composting, to join us for these engaging composting workshops!

The schedule begins this month with a home composting workshop on June 7, followed by vermicomposting (think worms!) on August 2. October 25 is another home composting session, and early December goes back to the worms on December 6. Workshops are held live on Zoom. A link will be sent the week before the event. You can register via Eventbrite or email [Maureen.Parkes@dcd.cccounty.us](mailto:Maureen.Parkes@dcd.cccounty.us)

You can also contact us at 925-655-2909.

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